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THE ASSIGNMENT OF LESSONS

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PRESS

THE ASSIGNMENT OF LESSONS

A principle of learning. Self-activity is one of the fundamental principles of learning. Learning occurs only through doing. It is, therefore, the primary duty of the teacher to stimulate the pupils under her charge to engage in appropriate mental activities. A prerequisite for the fulfillment of this duty is the formulation of tasks or exercises which will provide the basis of the desired activities. The assignment of learning exercises is, therefore, a vital phase of teaching.

Function of the assignment. The function of the assignment may be considered as threefold. It should set a definite task, motivate the accomplishment of this task, and give the pupils the necessary directions for study. Each of these functions will be discussed at some length.

Some writers give statements of the function of the assignment which involve more than three aims. One of the best of such statements is that given by Davis,[1] who states that the assignment should (a) show clearly what is to be done, (b) inspire pupils to perform the tasks set, (c) direct attention to difficulties and aid in overcoming them by suggesting aids and references, (d) show how the subject-matter is organized, mentioning relationships not likely to be seen by pupils, (e) place study material upon such a qualitative and quantitative plane that it will meet the needs and abilities of the class. The chief difference is that the last three points of the fivefold division are really subdivisions of the last one in the threefold division.

At this point the comment should perhaps be made that the purposes just mentioned are not separate and distinct from each other, but that they frequently, perhaps even usually, overlap. Although a teacher should be clear in her thinking as to just what purpose each part of her assignment is to fulfill, it is not necessary that this be apparent to the pupils. Furthermore, it should be noted that the purposes may not appear in each day's assignment. If the pupils' interest in a subject has been aroused previously, it is often unnecessary to do more than state clearly and definitely the tasks to be done in order to motivate the work of the next day. If the work

[1] Davis, S. E. The Work of the Teacher. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918, p. 141.

is of a type which has already been frequently encountered and for which directions and suggestions have been given, very little or nothing may need to be said about how the pupils are to study.

Importance of the assignment. The assignment is, in the writer's opinion, the most important part of the daily recitation because it provides the best opportunity for the teacher to promote the mental development of her pupils. The principle of self-activity, referred to above, implies that a teacher's success depends very largely on the type, difficulty, and number of exercises she assigns and the way in which she does so. If the assignment provides a suitable and definite task, instills a desire to accomplish it, and gives whatever help is necessary, then conditions are made so favorable that learning is almost sure to occur.

Furthermore, the assignment is of prime importance because it plays a large part in determining the general study habits of pupils. The fact that some individuals are lazy, careless, and slovenly in their mental activity, whereas others are attentive, persevering, and industrious, may be attributed in many cases to the kinds of assignments which have been made to them. If assignments commonly call for too much or too little work, are indefinite or ambiguous, appear burdensome or distasteful, or regularly require work on too low a mental level, it is practically inevitable that pupils will acquire undesirable study habits. On the other hand, if assignments demand the proper amount of time, challenge but do not exceed the pupils' best intellectual abilities, arouse an interest in the subject and a desire for knowledge, they will do much to develop habits of mental alertness, clear thinking, concentration, and other desirable traits.

When to make the assignment. Perhaps the most important principle concerning the time when the assignment should be made is that the teacher's practice be sufficiently flexible that she can adapt it to the differing circumstances which arise from day to day. It is probably desirable, however, to form the habit of making the assignment at a given time except when there is some reason for variation.

a. At the end of the period. Undoubtedly the most common practice is to make the assignment just before the close of the class period. Very frequently the result is that too little time is available in which to make it satisfactorily. There are, however, several arguments advanced to justify the practice. Probably the most valid of these is that the next day's work should be a logical outgrowth and

continuation of the present day's and that, therefore, the assignment should grow out of the current day's work and follow it. Another argument, of especial force when applied to the lower grades, is that the assignment should be made as near to the study period as possible so that the opportunity for the pupils to forget it before they begin their study will be minimized.

Both of these arguments have a measure of validity, but it does not follow that assignments regularly should be made just before the end of the period. If the recitation is followed by a supervised-study period during which the pupils remain with the same teacher, the close of the class period is generally the best time at which to make the assignment. In such a case the teacher will not be hurried, since, with the study period just ahead, as much time as is necessary can be used. In fact the assignment is so closely connected with the study which is to follow that it may be considered a part thereof and thus as belonging at the beginning of the study rather than at the close of the recitation period. In case supervised study follows immediately, the assignment should not be made last unless it depends upon the current day's work to such an extent that the latter must be completed first.

b. At the beginning of the period. Except when a supervised study period immediately follows the recitation, or when the assignment depends upon the current day's work, the writer believes that it should be made at the beginning of the period. The one outstanding advantage of this is that sufficient time is insured. In addition, it is probable that a higher degree of interest and attention can be secured at this time than later in the period.

c. During the period. In case the assignment does depend upon the current day's work, it is ordinarily necessary to wait until the close of the recitation to make it. Occasionally, however, something arises in the course of the class discussion which furnishes a very good point of departure for assigning part or all the exercises which the teacher wishes done for the next day. Some pupil may raise a question which cannot be answered offhand and which appears worthy of further consideration, the teacher may discover that some item needs further study, or some other occasion may arise which will motivate a portion or all of the assignment and which can be taken advantage of most profitably by making the assignment at once. For example, in American History the class may be discussing the part

taken by Roosevelt in the war with Spain, and some pupil may raise a question as to Roosevelt's later career. This would be a suitable opportunity to make an assignment dealing with Roosevelt's administration. To give another example, the teacher of a second-year Latin class might seize the moment when the pupils discover the difficulty of translating the speeches of Caesar and Ariovistus to make an assignment dealing with indirect discourse. This suggestion of course holds true whether a supervised-study period follows or not.

Planning the assignment. a. Planning in advance. In order to insure good assignments, particularly suitable learning exercises, it is desirable usually that the teacher plan for several days ahead. In general, plans should be made in detail for at least the next two days. It may be necessary to make some alterations in these plans because the teacher's expectations are not fulfilled or because unforeseen difficulties arise. In case the work assigned for the current day is not completed, the amount given for the next should be lessened. In other words, the assignment should not require more than can be prepared and discussed in class within the time indicated. If the class work frequently gets behind the assignment, the pupils are likely to become lax in their preparation and to lose interest in the delayed recitations. In planning ahead the teacher should not only decide upon the work that she wishes to cover in the next few days but also determine how much time will be required from day to day for the assignment and how much for the regular recitation. Unless she knows this approximately, she cannot plan the assignments as she should. As an illustration, take the case of a teacher who has available a forty-minute recitation period. On Monday when she makes the assignment for Tuesday, she needs to know how much of the forty-minute period on Tuesday will be devoted to reciting on the assignment made Monday. This involves knowing the assignment to be made on Tuesday for the recitation on Wednesday, and so on from day to day. For example, if Wednesday's work is such as to require a fifteen-minute assignment on Tuesday and thus leave only twenty-five minutes for recitation purposes on Tuesday, she should not, on Monday, assign as much work for Tuesday as if Wednesday's lesson required only a five-minute assignment and thus left thirty-five minutes on Tuesday for regular recitation purposes. In planning ahead the teacher should keep in mind also that the time required to

make the assignment is not always determined by the amount of material to be assigned, but rather by its nature, its similarity to what has been studied previously, the knowledge which the class has of the subject, and other simliar considerations.

To carry out the kind of planning just described, a teacher must not only make a detailed study of what is to be done in the next few days, but also have a wide familiarity with the subject-matter and with devices, methods, equipment, and other aids to teaching. To make sure that their work is planned ahead of time and that no essential points are overlooked, many teachers find it helpful to use prepared assignment sheets. Such a sheet contains a number of headings or items which serve to form an outline of what the teacher must think about and do in making the assignment. Each heading is followed by a blank space in which the teacher indicates what is to be done for the particular day.

b. Parts of the plan. There are several different ways in which the assignment may be divided but only one will be suggested here. This is a twofold division. In the first place the teacher should determine the aim, that is, set up goals to be reached; and in the second place she should determine what exercises the pupils should perform to achieve these goals. Although the aim need not always be definitely stated and labelled by the teacher, the members of the class should realize what it is and should understand it. They should see both the goals to be accomplished by each day's work and the relation of these to the more general objectives of the whole semester's or year's work. After the goals have been decided upon, the teacher should then consider what she can do in order to enable the pupils to achieve them. In this connection she should give attention to both the subject-matter and the method of attack upon it and, as a result of this attention, prepare a list of definite exercises to be assigned to the class.

Goals of the assignment. The goals that the teacher puts before the pupils should be stated in terms of information or abilities to be acquired. For example, the goal of a lesson on a portion of the multiplication table may be stated as being to review the tables up to 6 times 6 and to learn the tables of sevens and eights, up to 7 times 7 and 8 times 8, respectively; or, the goal of a foreign language lesson

may be to learn a certain vocabulary containing fifteen words, to understand and be able to apply a certain grammatical principle, to learn the present indicative, active and passive, of a given verb, and to translate a specified list of ten sentences into English.

The statement of the goals should be definite and understandable. The pupils should be told whether they are to learn the material assigned so well that they will retain it permanently, or whether merely for temporary use as a tool or introduction to something else, whether they are to learn it in detail or merely in outline, whether word for word or only to get the general thought. For example, it is better to tell a spelling class that a certain twenty words are to be studied until they can be spelled both orally and in writing, and also be defined and used in sentences, than to tell the class merely to study the twenty words. Again, instead of telling the pupils to study a certain geography lesson until it is learned, it is far preferable to specify that they should study it until they can name, locate, and describe all the cities mentioned, state the chief products and industries of the different portions of the country and so forth. Closely connected with definiteness is the fact that a teacher should indicate the proper emphasis to be placed upon different parts of the work assigned. It rarely occurs that all portions of the assignment are equally important or that all require equal amounts of study in order to be learned as well as is desired.

The goals set up should be not only definite and understandable, but also such that at least a fair proportion of the members of the class can achieve them. Furthermore, they should not be so numerous as to be confusing; neither should they be isolated, that is, the detailed daily goals should not be disconnected with each other or unrelated to the larger ones which control the whole semester's or year's work. They should rather lead the pupils to see that all the exercises performed are a series of steps toward a final end.

Motivating pupils' study. One of the most important things to be accomplished by the teacher in making the assignment is to motivate the work of her pupils. Since to motivate means to move to action, accomplishing this requires that the teacher should arouse in her pupils the desire to attack the exercises with zeal and energy. The motives and incentives employed for this purpose should be positive rather than negative, although there is occasional place for the latter. The motivation of pupils' mental activities is by no means restricted

to the making of the assignment, but should be contributed to by the review and the regular recitation as well and in a somewhat more indirect way by practically everything done by the teacher in connection with her teaching. Therefore, it is not the writer's purpose to enter into a detailed discussion of motivation.[2] He wishes merely to offer a few suggestions as to certain types of motivation peculiarly suited for use in connection with making the assignment.

a. Arousing interest and bringing out values in the subject-matter. The motivation of learning is very closely connected with the interests of the pupils. Therefore, the chief duty of the teacher in this respect should be to arouse interest in the subject-matter being studied. When this cannot be done in sufficient degree to motivate study satisfactorily, it will be necessary to make use of less desirable incentives, such as fear of failure or of rebuke. Closely connected with interest in the subject-matter is the appreciation by the pupils of the values contained therein. Especially in high school is it desirable that these values be brought out, and the teacher should devote some time and attention to the accomplishment of this task. This should be done in so far as possible through suggestions from the members of the class rather than directly from the teacher herself. Pupils frequently have the attitude that it is part of what a teacher is paid for to tell them that the work has value and therefore discount what she says, whereas they are more likely to believe that their classmates are sincere in stating what they expect to get out of the course.

In connection with making pupils realize the value of a particular task, it is not sufficient that they see the value of the course as a whole. For example, many pupils know that a course in English or algebra will yield definite values but they do not see how the daily work contributes toward these general ends. In other words, the mere knowledge that the course as a whole is worth while is rarely sufficient to motivate the daily work satisfactorily.

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[2]Any one who is interested in a more detailed discussion of this topic may find it in one of the following references or elsewhere.

Charters, W. W. Methods of Teaching. Chicago: Row, Peterson and Company, 1912, Chapters IX, X, and XI.

Nutt, H. W. Principles of Teaching High School Pupils. New York: The Century Company, 1922, Chapter IV.

Parker, S. C. Methods of Teaching in High Schools. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1920, Chapter XIV.

(b) **Stimulating curiosity.** Another means of motivation is to raise interesting questions that will stimulate the desire to perform the exercises assigned in order to learn the answers. It has been said that the most skillful assignment possible is one which is made in order to enable the pupils to find the answer to a question that has arisen in the recitation. Such an opportunity is frequently offered when a discussion or argument arises among the members of the class. It is much better for the teacher to avail herself of such an opportunity, which perhaps she may have provoked, than to propose the question directly. Closely connected with this is the practice of telling just enough about the next day's work to whet the pupils' curiosity. Bagley[3] says that the acme of a skillful assignment is reached when the teacher reveals just enough of what is contained in the lesson to stimulate in the pupils the desire to ascertain the rest for themselves. Thus, in assigning a reading lesson the teacher may tell in incomplete form one or two of the most interesting incidents contained therein and thus make the pupils wish to read the whole; or in assigning an algebra lesson on squaring binomials the teacher may show, without complete explanation, that such numbers as 98 and 201 may be squared easily in this way, but leave it to the class to discover just why the method yields the correct answer. For a third illustration we may refer again to Bagley,[4] who gives the following example. He states that a certain history teacher said that the best recitation he ever secured from a history class was one dealing with Benedict Arnold which resulted from an assignment which he introduced by saying that the next few pages of the book told about a very mean man, perhaps the meanest and most contemptible of whom he had ever heard. He then added that he doubted if it would pay to spend very much time on this man, but that after all it was a pathetic case and the students might read the pages over that evening.

c. **Appeal to past experience.** The teacher should make many appeals to the past experiences of the individual members of the class. She should point out relationships not only between the work being assigned and that studied previously, but also between the former and the pupils' past experiences outside of school. The op-

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[3]Bagley, W. C. The Educative Process. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915, p. 317.

[4]Bagley, W. C. Classroom Management. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916, p. 202-03.

portunities for this differ greatly in the various subjects. In nature study, physics, and literature, for example, they are relatively numerous, whereas in foreign language and trigonometry they are ordinarily much less so. Reference should be made to local history, industries and business, sports, recreations, and books. Usually the conversational method should be employed, that is, the teacher should induce the pupils to contribute these facts rather than to do so herself. The mere fact that they are making a contribution will do much to hold the interest of the pupils.

d. Speculation and imagination. A device which frequently is useful is the asking of questions that stimulate imagination and speculation. There is undoubtedly the greatest opportunity for questions of this sort in connection with history, but they may also be used in literature, geography, and some of the other subjects. Such questions as, "What do you think would have happened if the South had won the battle of Gettysburg?" and "What would be the political condition of our country if the French had won out in the French and Indian wars?" are of this type. Indeed, the teacher may go even a step further and formulate questions that call the dramatic instinct into play by leading the pupil to identify himself with some historical character. Examples of this type are: "If you had been President Buchanan, what would you have done when Fort Sumter was fired on?" and "If you had been President Cleveland, what steps would you have taken to try to avert the panic that occurred during his second administration?"

e. Appealing to instinct of mental activity. Since it is natural for normal human beings to be mentally active, provided the material being dealt with is of interest, making the assignment in a way to challenge the best efforts of the pupils frequently yields satisfactory results. Such statements as, "This is rather hard, but I believe you can get it if you will try," "Here's a hard question. See how many of you can be prepared to answer it tomorrow," or "I shouldn't ask some classes to do this, but I don't believe it is too hard for you" are likely to stimulate the class to unusual effort. This procedure may be varied by using such a statement as "I shall not assign this exercise as a part of the regular work because it is too difficult for all of you, but I shall be very much gratified if some of you can do it." As is true of the other forms of motivation, so here especially it is easy to overwork this device.

Statement of work to be covered. It is generally agreed that the topical[5] assignment is to be preferred under most conditions. Such an assignment usually requires that the pupils do more than merely study a textbook. Thus they are guided in learning how to obtain from books or other sources the needed information and to organize it in proper form. Some writers advocate that in making such assignments the teacher always give the exact reference or references, that is, tell the exact pages in each book or books which the pupils should consult. The present writer does not entirely agree with this view. He believes that it is proper to begin in this manner but not to continue specifying the references so explicitly. As the pupils acquire training in this sort of study, they should learn to work more and more independently. Therefore, in making assignments as well as in directing study, the teacher should aim at the goal of rendering the pupils capable of finding the available material upon a given topic with little or no assistance from her.

The topical assignment frequently may be made in the form of a list of questions covering the main points to be studied. Such a list may be arranged in outline form, with certain main questions and others subordinate to them. In other cases an outline of the usual type is appropriate. Sometimes it is possible and, when so, generally desirable that the list of questions or the outline be worked out by the members of the class under the guidance of the teacher rather than merely prepared and handed out by her.

Directing pupils in their study. From one standpoint the whole subject of study might properly be treated in a discussion of the assignment. This will not be attempted here, but instead some comments will be made concerning a few phases of study which appear to have an unusually close connection with the assignment and to which the teacher should give attention when planning and making the assignment. If there is no supervised study period available, it is probable that almost all the help that the teacher gives along this line will be in connection with making the assignment. Under such

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[5]The term "topical" is used in contradistinction to textbook assignment. By it the writer refers to an assignment that is based upon or centered around a topic or topics rather than upon certain pages of the textbook. The emphasis is, therefore, placed upon getting together information relating to the topics mentioned and organizing it into a whole rather than upon learning the information in a given number of pages regardless of the matter with which it deals.

conditions much more should be done at this time than is indicated by the following discussion.

a. Giving models or examples. In many cases, particularly when a new type of work is to be studied, it is advisable that examples actually be done in class. As an illustration, if a new type of problem in arithmetic or algebra is being assigned, one or two should be worked out by the pupils under the guidance of the teacher. In foreign language work it is sometimes desirable to do a portion of the translation in connection with the assignment. In case the memorizing of such items of knowledge as the multiplication table, spellings of words, or vocabularies or paradigms in a foreign language is required, they usually should be repeated by the class in order to make sure that a correct start is obtained. For example, in assigning the table of nine's the teacher might well have the class repeat in unison either after or with her: "One times 9 equals 9, two times 9 equals 18," and so on. Likewise, in giving a vocabulary in French the teacher should pronounce each French word along with its English meaning, thus, "l'homme—man," "La femme—woman," and so on, and require the class to repeat each immediately after her. This practice insures not only that a correct start is made but also that at least some attention is devoted to the material to be memorized.

b. Training in reading. Training in reading is one of the most frequently needed helps which the teacher can give her pupils.[6] Especially in high school, but also in elementary school, the subjects, except reading, are often assigned with no consideration of whether or not the pupils can read the material comprehendingly and at a reasonably rapid rate. If they cannot do so, they should be given training along this line as part of the assignment. Although a great deal of time cannot be devoted to such work, much improvement often can be brought about. One of the most profitable ways of giving training in reading is to require that the pupils read a certain amount of material in a limited time and then make an oral or writ-

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[6]In a study made of eight students, who were doing unsatisfactory work in the University High School of the University of Illinois, the investigator found that all of them were deficient in reading. For suggestions in regard to the various types of exercises devised to give these students training in reading, and for a report of the results of the investigation see:

Monroe, Walter S., and Mohlman, Dora K. "Training in the technique of study." University of Illinois Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 2, Bureau of Educational Research Bulletin No. 20. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1924. 66 p.

ten summary. These summaries should be limited in either length or time or both. For example, pupils may be told to read a certain five pages in fifteen minutes and to write a summary in one hundred words or in five minutes.

c. Pointing out difficulties. Clearing up special and unusual difficulties should be accomplished while making the assignment. The members of the class, as well as the teacher, should participate in this. Time often can be allowed for the pupils to skim through the material assigned in the endeavor to discover unusual difficulties. When these difficulties are mentioned, whether by pupils or teacher, the members of the class should be asked for suggestions as to how to cope with them. Allusions that will not be understood and that the pupils will need to look up should be mentioned. Unfamiliar words and those used with unusual meanings should be called to attention. Although it is a general psychological principle that pupils should not be told of errors which they have not made, yet if the teacher knows from past experience that certain errors are rather sure to occur, she may well warn the class against them. In this connection it is helpful for the teacher to recall her experiences not only when teaching the same subject previously, but also when studying it herself.

d. Rules for study. It is usually advisable for the teacher to give her pupils a few rules which are rather definite but not too complicated to guide them in their study. Although she need not attempt to state complete psychological justifications for these rules, as it is not necessary that the pupils understand the topic of study as she does, she should point out briefly why each rule is good and in this way interest the pupils in remembering and following it. Probably the best compilation of rules of which the teacher may make use is that prepared by Whipple,[7] but there are many other sources from which such lists may be obtained. A number of books devoted to the subject of study have been published, and many of those dealing with methods and with other phases of teaching contain chapters or sections relating to the topic of effective study.

Miscellaneous suggestions. a. Providing for individual differences. Many writers suggest that assignments should be made so

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[7] Whipple, G. M. How to Study Effectively. Bloomington, Illinois. Public School Publishing Company, 1916.

that certain exercises are indicated which all members of the class are expected to perform, additional ones for all except the few dullest and still others for the few brightest pupils. These are commonly referred to as minimum, average, and maximum assignments. It is not necessary that the number of differentiated assignments be three. Sometimes two are used, sometimes four or five or even more, but three appears to be the most common number, as pupils usually are classified into three groups on the basis of ability. Although the writer is in general sympathy with the idea of making such differentiated assignments, he does not believe that it is necessary to do so every day, nor that differentiated assignments should be the only means of caring for individual differences.

When differentiated assignments are made, the teacher should be certain that nothing which ought to be studied by the whole class is given to only a portion of it. In other words, assignments should be differentiated by deciding upon a common body of minimum essentials which should be required of all and adding to that for those who can do more work, rather than by deciding upon a body of material for the brightest pupils and omitting certain items for the others. Furthermore, if a few members of the class rather constantly misunderstand the assignments because of their low degree of mental ability, they should be given the additional explanation and help needed at such times that the remainder of the class will not sit in idleness while this is being done.

b. Pointing out relationships. There are frequently relationships between different parts of what is being assigned or between certain portions of it and knowledge previously acquired which pupils are not likely to discover for themselves. The teacher should either point these out directly or lead the class to find them. For example, a character or event in history may often be compared with some person or thing already known to the class, or the relationships between events remote from each other in time and distance may be mentioned. Again, when assigning a foreign language vocabulary, attention may be called to English derivatives that do not appear as meanings. To give still another example, the lower grade teacher, who is teaching the product of 8 times 4 when the pupils have already had that of 4 times 8, should be sure that they realize that the two products are to most intents and purposes the same.

c. Length and difficulty of assignments. One point in securing efficient study is that the exercises assigned to be done shall not be too long, too numerous, nor too difficult. If pupils believe that the work assigned is too difficult, they are likely to exert themselves much less than if they feel that they can complete it with a reasonable expenditure of time and effort. Furthermore, they are encouraged to be satisfied with partial success or to form the habit of failing. Although assignments that are too short or too easy tend to encourage carelessness in mental habits, the evil results from them are less than from those that are too difficult. A teacher should, therefore, risk making the assignments too easy rather than too hard.

d. Economy in making assignments. Although a teacher should not hesitate to make use of all the time that can profitably be devoted to assigning the next day's lesson, she should make sure that none is wasted. For example, if it is necessary for the pupils to have at hand a considerable amount of material which must be given by the teacher, it should be duplicated in some way and distributed rather than copied from dictation or from the board. The requirement that assignments be written in full detail in notebooks has some merit, but is wasteful of time. The writer believes that the same advantages will be gained without waste by allowing pupils to take down the assignment in abbreviated form, writing only as much as is necessary to make sure that it can be recalled properly. Assignments for individual work such as reading, reports and so forth often may be written on slips of paper and handed to the various members of the group instead of being given orally to each pupil and thus consuming the time of the whole class.

e. Securing attention. It very commonly happens that pupils are much less attentive while the assignment is being made than at any other time during the class period. Frequently they jot down a few notes to indicate just what is to be studied, but pay little attention to any suggestions by the teacher as to how this should be done. The chief means of overcoming such an attitude is to make sure that the various suggestions and directions given are helpful. If the pupils are led to realize that they will find it difficult or even impossible to prepare the work satisfactorily if these directions are not heeded, or that attention to directions will reduce the amount of time and effort necessary to accomplish the desired end, they will be apt to give careful attention to the entire assignment.

Criteria for judging assignments. Although all of the previous discussion may be applied in judging how well a particular assignment has been made, it probably will be helpful to give certain definite criteria by means of which the merit of an actual assignment may be judged. The best brief list of criteria for this purpose with which the writer is familiar is that given by Waples,[8] as follows:

1. Are the teacher's directions, whether oral or written, understood fully by each pupil in the class?
2. Is the purpose of the assignment entirely clear to each pupil in the sense that he knows definitely what he is expected to do with it and why?
3. Are the teacher's directions sufficiently detailed and explicit to teach the class how to use materials efficiently and to prevent pupils from wasting time in their search for materials?
4. Do the teacher's directions show how the material should be studied, e. g., what passages are to be particularly emphasized and which read rapidly, and so forth?
5. Does the assignment arouse interest in the following class discussion?
6. Does it require only a legitimate amount of time from the pupil of average ability?
7. Does it provide for marked differences in ability and interest?
8. Does it require reflective thinking either in terms of the subject matter or in terms of related situations in the pupil's experience?
9. Is the work which the pupil is expected to do of sufficient value to him to justify the time and effort required to do it?

Waples makes it clear that he does not regard this list as complete and exhaustive, and furthermore, that all the criteria do not apply with equal force to all assignments. On the whole, however, it may be said that any assignment which satisfies all these criteria is almost certain to be an excellent one, whereas any that fails to meet as many as two or three of them is rather surely unsatisfactory.

Burton[9] gives a list of questions that may be used in judging the assignment, also a second list, which he terms, "Observation Outline in Terms of Pupil Activity." The questions in this outline probably

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[8] Waples, Douglas. Procedures in High-School Teaching. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924. p. 156-57. (Reprinted with permission of the Macmillan Company.)

[9] Burton, W. H. Supervision and the Improvement of Teaching. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1923. p. 183-86.

will prove of even more help to the teacher in judging her assignments than the Waples' criteria, and are given as follows:

1. Do the pupils raise new problems for solution as outgrowths of the one under discussion? Do they ask such questions as lead to such new problems?

2. Do they attempt to get better understanding and clearer wording of the problem by asking questions about it? By rewording it themselves?

3. Do they develop the finished statement of the problem, subheads, if any, and the method of attack, through a discussion freely participated in by all members of the group?

4. Are they active and aggressive in outlining the problem? In suggesting methods of procedure? Do they assist in breaking the main problem into smaller ones, and in assigning these to groups within the class?

5. Do they volunteer to be responsible for one of the subaims? For certain sources of information? For such extra work as arises in the course of the discussion?

6. Do they volunteer information already in their possession?

7. Do they ask questions that indicate a realization of the problems that will confront them when they attack the sources and begin to gather evidence? Do they recall any study rules or hints which may have been given them?

8. Do they use notes or written outlines in lengthy assignments?

9. If they ask each other questions about the assignment, do the questions indicate inattention by the pupil or insufficient and hurried assignment by the teacher?

10. Can they restate or outline briefly the problem? The general line of attack in summary form?

11. The supervisor should note also the effect of varied assignments on the class. Whether they take it as a matter of course. Regard the longer assignments as a burden, a challenge, etc. Do the slower ones hurry in an effort to do more than their ability warrants, become discouraged, etc.?

Bibliography. The references given below are by no means exhaustive. The writer selected from the books that he had at hand, the following list as containing the most helpful discussions of the assignment. In some cases the pages cited do not present complete discussions, but merely discuss one or more phases of the general topic.

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